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ABSTRACT

Developing teachers for multicultural education is an essential assignment for teacher education and school administration today so that educators might help their students learn to live in a multicultural society. In an earlier view, public schools were considered the "great equalizers" among America's social institutions. The assumption was that sameness resulted in equality. One of the problems with this thinking was that imposing assimilation upon different cultural and racial groups rarely achieved a sense of equality. The myth also existed that public schools encouraged upward mobility among the immigrants and minority groups. The death of the melting pot myth received official recognition in the United States with the passage of Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, popularly known as the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program. At the same time, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education issued a comprehensive statement, entitled "No One Model American," on the melting pot's successor, multicultural education. Multicultural education is the public school's response to a revitalized cultural pluralism, which has become a predominant value in the American social fabric. Cultural pluralism views the United States as a multicultural society and stresses a new interpretation of the word "different"--different means simply different, not better than or worse. The teacher is the key person in developing a program and curriculum that will meet the goals of cultural pluralism and multicultural education. (MM)

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Teachers for Multicultural Education

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Harry N. Rivlin, Director

TEACHERS FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

There was a time in the not-so-distant past when one of the great boasts of public education in the United States was that it melted in one big pot the different cultures of all the students who filled our classrooms. The product which resulted from this mixture was supposedly an "American." The schools were expected to go to work on children who came from foreign shores — or whose parents had done so — and when the schools had finished their job, these young people would speak, behave, and even think and look the way an American should.

In this earlier view, the public schools were to be the "great equalizer" among America's social institutions. The assumption was that sameness resulted in equality, and since equality was what everyone who immigrated to this country was after, this was viewed as the great mission of public education. The problem with this way of thinking was that imposing assimilation upon each of the different cultural and racial groups that entered the schools rarely achieved a sense of equality. More often, the newcomers faced frustration and reacted with resentment. Furthermore, no one has ever really been able to agree upon a definition of an "American" so that in no real way was the goal achieved. The notion of a model American never got beyond being just that — a notion.

The End of a Myth

There was also the myth that the public schools took the immigrants and the children of immigrants and started them on the ladder of upward social mobility. It is only natural that people should ask: Why aren't the schools equally successful these days with the children of the Blacks, the Chicanos, the Puerto Ricans, the Native Americans? Why do these children drop out of school prematurely and drop into a society that is unprepared to receive the unskilled and the unschooled?

Colin Greer* has demonstrated, depressingly, that the schools never were as successful as they were reputed to be with immigrant children. This thought is small comfort, however, for parents of minority group children who see that the longer their youngsters stay in school, the farther and farther their achievements fall below the levels attained by other youngsters in American schools. Why do these minority children drop out in such disproportionate numbers to join the ranks of other discouraged and frustrated minority children? Can the schools learn how to teach the children from minority ethnic groups?

The very concept of the Melting Pot has become unacceptable today because of the implication that minority ethnic groups have nothing to contribute to American life and culture and that ethnic groups must surrender their ethnic identity in order to be "assimilated." How does one Americanize a Native American whose ancestors lived here long before there was an America, or a black whose family has been here for hundreds of years, or a Puerto Rican who is legally as much an American citizen as a resident of any of the fifty states?

Clearly the advocates of the Melting Pot saw no richness and no advantage in our being a multicultural society. Focusing on the aspirations and frustrations of the immigrants from Europe, moreover, the Melting Pot adherents considered only national and religious differences but ignored color differences, even though color has been the most persistent exclusionary labeling device in this country.

Some educators speak of *minority* ethnic groups as though the crux of the problem lay in their numerical size. Has the educational achievement of black and Spanish speaking children improved dramatically in such cities as New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Chicago and Washington as these children have become the overwhelming majority of the public school population? Let's face it. The problem is not one of being the "majority" or the "minority" but rather of one of prejudice and its effect on race relations and education.

*Colin Greer, *The Great School Legend* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972).

The conflicts, moreover, are all too frequently not only between an ethnic group and the "middle class white American" but between the members of one ethnic group and those of another ethnic group, especially when the competition becomes acute for jobs and for housing. The problems of race relations also tend to be accentuated when we move from abstract discussion to action that involves the individual himself; when, for example, we change the question from, "Should schools in another state be integrated?" to "Should the school my children attend be integrated?"

"No One Model American"

Objections to the Melting Pot idea have become increasingly forceful. Pride in ethnic heritage, as illustrated in the slogan "Black Is Beautiful", with its counterparts for other ethnic groups, has found expression in Black Power, Indian Power, Puerto Rican Power, Italian Power, and other ethnic power groups as members of each group seek both to preserve their own ethnic identity and to get the rights and rewards to which all Americans are entitled. The book, *I Am Somebody**, is indicative of the ways in which children are being taught to be proud, rather than ashamed, of their ethnic identity.

Pride in one's cultural background is an essential first step in developing an American society that is open to all, but it is only one step. If we are to become neither a separatist nor an assimilated society, respect for one's own culture must be accompanied by respect for the culture of others. We need not only "I Am Somebody" but also "You Are Somebody, Too." If we are to become a truly effective multicultural nation, this concept must become part of the value system and action pattern of all people, regardless of whether they are in a majority or minority ethnic group.

Appropriately enough, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education statement on multicultural education, which was adopted officially in November 1972 by its Board of

*_I Am Somebody_. Stories and Poems by Black Children Collected by Ana Obenewaa. (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1970).

Directors as a guide for addressing the issue of multicultural education, is entitled *No One Model American.*

The AACTE statement begins by saying:

> Multicultural education is education which values cultural pluralism. Multicultural education rejects the view that schools should seek to melt away cultural differences or the view that the schools should merely tolerate cultural pluralism. Instead, multicultural education affirms that schools should be oriented toward the cultural enrichment of all children and youth through programs rooted to the preservation and extension of cultural alternatives. Multicultural education recognizes cultural diversity as a fact of life in American society, and it affirms that this cultural diversity is a valuable resource that should be preserved and extended. It affirms that major educational institutions should strive to preserve and enhance cultural pluralism.

The death of the Melting Pot myth received official recognition in the United States with the passage by Congress in 1972 of Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, popularly known as the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program. The purpose as stated in the Act is "to afford students opportunities to know more about the nature of their own heritage and to study the contributions of the cultural heritage of other ethnic groups of the nation."

In this way Congress acknowledged as a matter of public policy that the public schools should bury once and for all the proposition that "America is God's crucible, the Great Melting Pot – God is making the American,"* an idea which dominated the philosophy and strategy of so many educators. Ethnic or cultural pluralism, the very opposite of a melting pot assimilation approach in education, is and should be a major goal of our schools.

*This statement, made in a popular stage play early in the 20th century by Israel Zangwill, became the most representative expression of the "melting pot" idea.

Cultural Pluralism: More Than a Slogan

The National Coalition for Cultural Pluralism defined cultural pluralism as:

> a state of equal co-existence in a mutually supportive relationship within the boundaries or framework of one nation of people of diverse cultures with significantly different patterns of belief, behavior, color, and in many cases with different languages. To achieve cultural pluralism, there must be unity with diversity. Each person must be aware of and secure in his own identity, and be willing to extend to others the same respect and rights that he expects to enjoy himself.*

Cultural pluralism views the United States as becoming a multicultural society in which the different ethnic cultures live in a symbiotic relationship which enriches each other. In a truly multicultural society, the members of all ethnic groups, regardless of color, nationality, religion, sex and relative numerical strength, share in the responsibility for developing productive ways of working together.

Cultural pluralism stresses a new interpretation of the word *different* as applied to cultural differences. *Different* means *different*, not *better than* or *worse than*. It is illustrated by the story of a westerner who saw his oriental friend putting a bowl of rice on his grandfather's grave and asked, "When will your grandfather get up to eat the rice?" To which his friend replied, "At the same time that your grandfather gets up to smell the flowers you put on his grave." *Different* means *different*, not *better than* or *worse than*.

While the schools alone cannot solve the complex problems of race relations in the United States, the problems will not be solved without the full participation of all who are involved in education. Certainly, the schools should themselves serve as examples of the ways in which cultural diversity is understood and treated. The schools must regard cultural diversity as an asset, not a problem, and teachers must be able to respect, and thus to teach, *all* the children in their classes.

*Madelon D. Stent, William R. Hazard, and Harry N. Rivlin, *Cultural Pluralism in Education: A Mandate for Change* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1973), p. 14.

This country is indeed a multicultural nation made up mainly of immigrants and migrant peoples. The Indians were the native American population, while the Spanish established influence from Florida through Texas and New Mexico to California, and the French moved up and down the Mississippi and Ohio River Valleys before the American colonies were established.

The English, first settling in 1607 at Jamestown, Virginia, were followed by Germans, Scottish, Scotch-Irish, and Welsh. French Huguenots settled in the Carolina area; Swedish Lutherans, in Delaware; the Dutch, in the New York area; Roman Catholics, in Maryland; and the Greek Orthodox, in Florida. The first census of the United States, taken in 1790, showed that more than half of the population consisted of African, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, German, Dutch, Swedish, French and other non-English inhabitants.

Since that first census, the population of the United States has continued to grow not only in size but also in cultural diversity. Even the source of European immigration changed, with, by 1905, 75 per cent coming from southern and eastern Europe rather than from northwestern Europe.

More recently, changes in the immigration laws accelerated the immigration of people from oriental countries and from countries south of our border. Probably of even greater social significance was the migration within our national borders of blacks from the south to the north and of Puerto Ricans from their native island to the mainland. While the United States may be viewed as a "nation of nations," to an even greater degree it is a "culture of many cultures."

Ethnicity usually reflects, or is at least related to, nationality and cultural background. There is a commonality of traits, some physical, some cultural, including family patterns, religion, occupation, language, life style and traditions.* For this reason, we include racial groups among "ethnics."

*See: Judith Herman, *The Schools and Group Identity* (New York: Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity, 1974), p. 17.

The Survival of Ethnic Patterns

How do we account for the fact that the ethnic patterns in the United States have not only survived public education's earlier philosophy and strategy of assimilation, but probably remain even stronger and more viable than at any other time in the nation's history? One social commentator suggests the following factors:

> After every wave of immigration, strong sentiments of "nationalism" resulted in prejudice against immigrants, forcing them to close ranks for protection and to isolate themselves into ethnic colonies.
>
> Cultural conservatives in the ethnic communities exhorted their compatriots to remain loyal to their religion, language, customs and traditions . . .
>
> Third and fourth generation descendants of immigrants desired to seek out their ancestral roots and to perpetuate ethnic traditions – food, songs, dances – which gave them identity.*

America, then, as a nation, resembles a mosaic – an inlay of cultural pluralities. Every cultural group in this nation is a minority group and has the right as well as the will to preserve its cultural heritage without at the same time diminishing its responsibilities in American civic life. *Cultural Pluralism* is no mere slogan, but rather it is a compelling reality of American values no longer to be challenged by the Melting Pot concept.

Teachers as Leaders in Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is the public schools' response to a revitalized cultural pluralism which has become a predominant value in the American social fabric. Needless to say, the teacher is the key person in developing a program and curriculum which will meet the goals of multicultural education. In this, as in all other situations, the teacher is crucial to the success of what the schools attempt to accomplish with children.

*Andrew T. Kopan, "Melting Pot: Myth or Reality?" in *Cultural Pluralism*, Edgar G. Epps ed. (Berkeley, Cal.: McCutchan Publ. Corp., 1974) p. 50.

It is important, therefore, that teachers understand and work for cultural pluralism. To be successful, the multicultural approach to education depends upon the teacher's understanding of different ethnic cultures, upon his attitudes toward differences in ethnic backgrounds, and upon his ability to develop teaching strategies appropriate for a multicultural classroom. It is essential that the teacher recognize the different linguistic backgrounds of children such as the Chinese, Hispanics, Native Americans, Europeans and Haitians who come from families in which English is not the mother tongue.

In familiarizing himself with another ethnic culture, preferably through first-hand experience in living with, or at least working with, people from that ethnic group, the teacher should learn their values, customs, achievements, aspirations and frustrations and, where possible, their language. He can see that such categories as *Oriental* and *Native American* are much too inexact because they include culturally diverse groups. For example, the term *Oriental* may ignore the wide cultural differences among the Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese and Koreans, and most textbooks refer to Native Americans as though all the tribes had the same language and values. From these studies, he should learn a general approach to understanding other cultures since no college curriculum can include the study of all the cultures a teacher is likely to meet in the future.

The Danger of New Stereotypes

As the teacher studies another culture, he must be aware of the danger of creating *new ethnic stereotypes* to replace traditional stereotypes. While there are marked differences between cultures, there is also great variation among the individuals within the same culture. For example, some Puerto Ricans want their island to become an independent nation, some want statehood, and some want to continue with basically the present relationship to mainland America. Similarly, some blacks want an integrated school system, while others think the solution lies in the development of separate school systems, with the education of black

children controlled by the black community and conducted by black teachers and administrators.

In every minority group there are at least three sub-groups: (1) the "Uncle Toms" who are ready to be the lackeys of the dominant cultural group; (2) militants who see force as the only way to achieve the power denied them; and (3) moderates who are looking for ways in which members of different ethnic groups can work together harmoniously and effectively. Bigotry, moreover, is not limited to any group, majority or minority, and every group has some who see naught but good in everything they do and only evil in what others do or seek to do. The teacher must never lose sight of the fact that each child is an individual who must be treated as an *individual* and not merely as a "Black," "Puerto Rican," "Chicano," or "Native American."

Teachers must therefore acquire as much knowledge as possible about ethnic cultures. Too often their professional training as well as their personal life experiences have failed to prepare them for this task.

> Many teachers have been reared in an environment and at a time when little notice was given to evidence of prejudice and discrimination. Their community experiences were often sheltered and circumscribed; their school experiences were based on textbooks which emphasized likenesses among ethnic groups in an effort to promote the melting pot idea, which neglected sadly the reality of cultural differences. If they met persons of other groups, such meetings were only passing curiosities. Only rarely have teachers had opportunity to know well any culture but their own. Under these circumstances, pupils with whom these teachers work are unlikely to understand cultural characteristics in anything more than a superficial way.*

The teacher should have studied in some depth his own cultural heritage and that of at least one other ethnic group, and he should have developed an open-mindedness to all cultural differences, recognizing how much more we are all alike than we are different. Throughout his professional career he should be

*Maxine Dunfee, "Resources for Educators," in *Eliminating Ethnic Bias in Instructional Materials*, (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1974), p. 31.

able to work in a multicultural environment in his college and in the community and schools where he is fulfilling his role as a teacher. He needs to develop an awareness of who he is and what his ethnic background is. He must study the attitudes existing in his own community toward other ethnic groups. He should develop that sensitivity toward others which is almost inevitable when one examines his own identity.

Having acquired the self-understanding described here, the teacher must then take specific steps which will enable him to deal compassionately as well as effectively with other ethnic cultures and that will help him to develop in his students a similar understanding and acceptance of people from other cultural backgrounds, with different values and practices not necessarily better or worse than their own.

Teaching Strategies

We once thought education had taken a giant step forward – and it had – when it recognized that *understanding* the child was the essential prerequisite to teaching him. "Teach the child, not the subject" was an easily understood and winning slogan, but it is not enough.

In a sense, every classroom in the country is crowded because each pupil brings to class not only himself but also his family, his friends and his cultural background, with its values and practices. To understand the child also means understanding his background.

Educational and child psychology are essential parts of the teacher's preparation for teaching but so also are social psychology and sociology. Learning is a social as well as an individual process.

The teacher must know how to develop a variety of teaching strategies which are appropriate for the child and for the ethnic groups from which his pupils come. Thus, what makes a subject or a topic relevant to a pupil depends to a great extent on the values and the aspirations of the student and his family rather than of those of a middle-class white community whose values

and aspirations are often reflected in the school curriculum. It is hardly likely, therefore, that a teacher can be effective in a classroom unless he understands the ethnic cultures of his students.

The curriculum in the schools should reflect the pluralism of our society. Traditional social studies texts and readers have expressed a dominant attitude that the prevailing culture has its origin basically in England, and that other groups must accept English traditions and values as modified by the experience of Englishmen in America. Only in recent years have minorities found greater recognition in textbooks and classroom activities.

Ethnic studies afford one corrective for this approach, but ethnic studies should not be limited to the "ethnics" themselves. *All* of us need to know more about each other. A more effective approach lies in thorough reconsideration of every area of study, giving full attention to various group contributions, strengths and problems in their natural order and not as a separate area of study. An excellent example is the syllabus of United States History for Secondary Schools, *American Majorities and Minorities**, which was prepared under the direction of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Pluralism as a Positive Goal

Most people react to differences in culture either positively or negatively. Thus, there are those who are attracted by these differences and want to know more about another culture and the factors that led to its development. Other people, by contrast, either ignore or fear differences in cultures and seek to avoid or repress any culture other than their own. We need teachers who recognize, respect, and welcome cultural diversity not only as an abstraction but as a vital force in their lives, both professional and personal, and who seek to develop similar attitudes in their students.

This need is especially acute today because many ethnic groups, formerly ignored or rejected as minorities, are now

*Warren J. Halliburton and William L. Katz, *American Majorities and Minorities* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1970).

seeking to achieve full citizenship and to share in the benefits of life in America which have for so long been denied them. The Kerner Commission was probably only partly correct when it saw the United States as moving in the direction of becoming two societies, separate but unequal. It is more realistic (and depressing) to see the United States drifting in the direction of becoming an even more fractionalized and factionalized society as each ethnic group seeks to mobilize its own "power" and get its share of "the action."

The content of the curriculum and the organization of our schools help to determine the school's success in developing a multicultural society. Individual teachers, however, have a key role to play, for so much depends upon the way teachers feel about people from different cultures, what they know about their own culture and other cultures, how they teach all children, especially those from ethnic backgrounds other than their own, and how successful they are in developing in their students both an appreciation of their own culture and positive attitudes toward other cultures. Developing teachers for multicultural education is an essential assignment for teacher education and school administration today so that teachers, in turn, may help their students learn to live in a multicultural society.

The assignment is as difficult as it is important.